

TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

LEONEL VÁSQUEZ

Jagüey

Photo: Leonel Vásquez, *Vibrations*, 2016



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Jagüey

April-June 2016

Lab 3

"I saw the dry brook, I remembered the recorded sounds and I was surprised by how quickly those sounds are becoming patrimonial. I thought about how important it is to have an abundant sound archive that is associated to water events, because in these new environmental and political conditions, it may possibly be the only thing we have left".

Notes, Leonel Vásquez's field logbook

This sound installation takes its name from the *jagüeyes* in La Guajira, large depressions where water forms pools and deposits due to the containment action of clay soils. The *W'ayuu* community relies on these natural concavities to accumulate rainwater during the winter so they can stock up on water in periods of drought. The use of these geophysical containers denotes the resistance, adaptation and coexistence of multiple forms of life subjected to extreme ecosystems.

This project is articulated based on three core notions that group several thematic interests: *Bodies of water*, *Survival*, and *Reservoir*.

Bodies of water is an invitation to explore the possibilities of perceiving sound with all of our being: our senses, our bones, our skin and inner fluids ("descentralized auralty"); possibilities provided by our body, for example, to develop underwater hearing and which may surpass the limits of any visual field.

The second theme, *Survival*, is a call to encounter the voices, songs and sounds that inhabit the waters. It is about the echoes and resonances in soundscapes and the encounter with cultural traditions where the territory is configured through its songs.

Finally, *Reservoir* encourages us to think about the environmental catastrophes towards which contemporary humans are headed, from the perspective of the memories offered by endangered or extinct soundscapes.

Water from the jagüey, aside from playing a survival role for human consumption (quenching thirst, use for personal hygiene, watering herds of goats, and so many other possibilities) holds an important place in the traditions and customs of the peoples of La Guajira.

In this environment, water configures a key part of the landscape: *jagüeyes* are palpable knots (nodes) in a fabric of biological and cultural relationships where the human, the natural and the supernatural unfold. The *jagüey* is a water reservoir, a sound reservoir, a reservoir of life, and a reservoir of myths.

Jagüeyes hold the possibility of subsistence for a population that in recent years has been at risk due to a long season of drought, a fact that intensified human displacement and led the community to celebrate rites where they sing *jayechi*^[1] to call the rain. They also sing to the water because that way they can express the deep feeling of respect and admiration that it awakens in them.

These songs are part of the ancestral rites of water nurturing: practices of understanding, interacting and caring for the element-liquid that allow to treat it as if it were a living being with feelings, emotions, and as if it were capable of reproducing by itself, similar to what happens with humans.

To tackle waterscapes from the perspective of sound means engaging in the temporary and ephemeral experience of a territory in crisis. It is the urgent expression of an environment that is drying up, partly because of natural evolution, partly because of human intervention.

The installation exhibited at Lab3, in the Medellín Museum of Modern Art (MAMM), invites spectators to experiment with the cyclic complexity that waterscapes possess.

This is a research project that includes field recordings, encounters with communities and their songs, as well as a laboratory that experiments with hydraulic physics combined with other materials and technologies that react to the sound of air, metal, and, of course, water and clay in order to generate new sound experiences.

[1] *Jayechi* is a vocal genre that a single man or woman intones in solitary. It is made up of verses and begins with a vocal effect in the form of a nasal lament or moan (their voice glides or drags): Mmmm, mmmmm, mmmmm, mmmmm.

Listening to the sounds produced by water livens the possibility of interpreting its messages, while it offers us tools to harmonize with its transits and become aware of our participation in them.

Understanding waterscapes, both in abundance and in scarcity, allows us to rethink the cultural, economic and environmental priorities of water use practices, and implies recovering a sustainable model based on the understanding of this element's own rhythms.

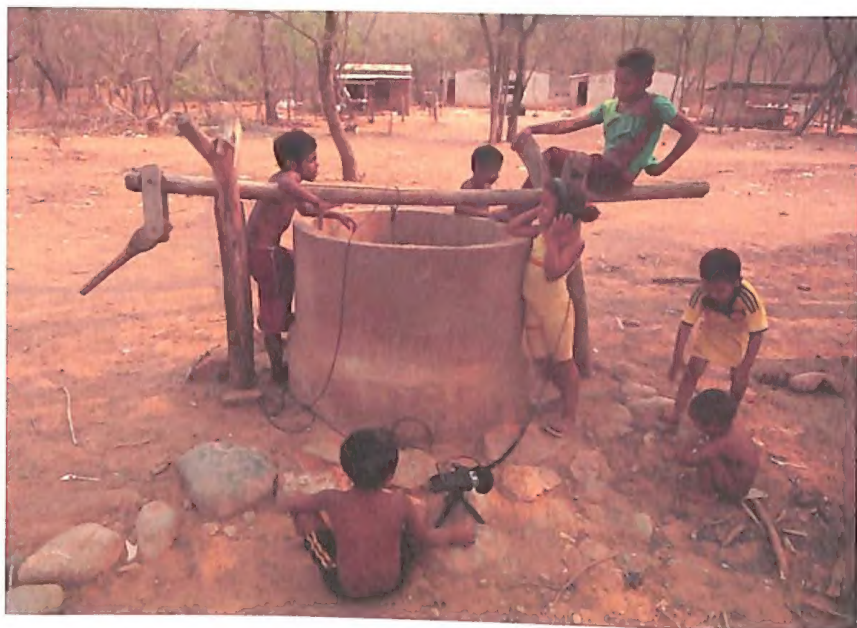


Photo: Leonel Vásquez. *Niños escuchan con hidrófonos el fondo del pozo de la comunidad Horqueta*, 2016

Special thanks to the wayúu communities: el Rocío, la Horqueta, Charito, y Cobeñas. La voz del *Jayechie* en la obra es de Guillermo Urariyu Puchaina, máxima autoridad de comunidad indígena de Cobeñas.

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